

Opinion

The Facts

BILL CORNWELL  
Editor and Publisher

ROB LUDWIG  
Managing Editor

C. ALLIN MEANS  
Associate Editor  
(Opinion)

GREG BARR  
Associate Editor  
(News)

Editorial

Sanctity

Family stability begins with stable marriages

Nothing is sacred anymore, not even the most important bond between two human beings. More important than any peace treaty or contract agreement is the institution of marriage, and yet it continues to crumble at a disheartening rate.

For every two marriage ceremonies performed there is at least one divorce procedure also being performed. Remember when it was alarming to hear the statistic that one out of every three marriages fails? Well, now it's about one out of two.

That means if you're getting married there is about a 50-50 chance that you will stay married to your spouse forever. Is this upsetting to anyone?

It should be. The breakdown of family begins with the breakdown of marriage. In Texas last year there were 177,497 marriages recorded by the Bureau of Vital Statistics, and 96,898 divorces.

If you read *The Facts*' list of marriages and divorces each Sunday, they're usually approximately the same length. Roughly, that means as many divorces are happening in Brazoria County as marriages. Depressing.

The most popular age range for getting married in 1993 was 20-24 in Texas, and divorces were most common among those between the ages of 30 and 34. What does this tell us? Unscientifically, it tells us many marriages aren't making it much past a decade.

Marriage is too often considered a trial living arrangement of convenience. "If it doesn't work out, we can always get a divorce." The divorce process is too easy. But, more significantly, the institution of marriage is not being taken seriously enough.

It's not about tuxedos, gowns, honeymoons and picket fences, it's about growing together as a couple – a team – and growing old together. It's about love that grows deeper with time.

For every divorce there is a story, usually a sad one – especially if there are kids involved. While many families bounce back and even improve after divorce, others do not, resulting in a cycle that produces insecurity in the kids and in the parties signing the divorce papers.

We should never take marriage lightly. We should always seek solid counseling before walking down the aisle, and again on a regular basis during marriage if problems arise. And we should never forget the words spoken before God at most wedding ceremonies: "Until death do us part." The return of stable families begins with the return of marriages that last forever.

*Today's editorial is by C. Allin Means, Opinion Page editor of The Brazosport Facts.*

The skin is getting too thin

If journalists don't toughen up as watchdogs, who will?



Michael Quinn Sullivan

■ If journalists are to be taken seriously by the public, they need to put away their bleeding hearts and toughen their skin. It's time for those of us in this most despised and needed of professions to own up to our convictions and then do our jobs.

"There seems to be no bounds (in the media) to attempt to destroy all confidence that people might and ought to have in government."

While that quote could easily be attributed to President Clinton, he did not utter the words. In fact, those were spoken by our nation's first president, George Washington. It seems there's always been a healthy disdain between the elected presidents and the unelected watchdogs.

But when Washington uttered those words, the press relished them as badges of honor – not because they were wanting to destroy a nation, but because it was proof they were doing their job as an observer of the government. They were hunting dogs ready to tackle the prey.

In fact, the media – which now includes television, newspaper and radio journalists – has been quick to criticize and examine presidents and elected officials since our nation began. Journalists were thick-skinned, hard-nosed men and women who rose above the harsh criticism leveled by their subjects. They did their job and cursed those who got in the way, all while not letting their feelings get hurt.

Until now.

Now not a week goes by in which some sniveling journalist is not questioning the profession's moral actions. It seems many in the Fourth Estate are suddenly afraid that their work is having a detrimental effect on American government and life. They take criticism from the administration as lashings requiring immediate remedy.

The press of the '90s is wanting to be a kinder, gentler sort of establishment – one which does not peer too deeply at anything which might offend someone, especially the government.

The truth is that the media has slipped; that journalists are taking themselves – and their subjects – too seriously.

The notion that a journalist has no bias is a myth and lie which only in this century has surfaced, but you won't hear that from 99 percent of the people who make their living as news gatherers. Most of my colleagues try (albeit unsuccessfully) to live in a world of gray – void of absolutes. As a result, they are unable to admit – even to themselves – the

hypocrisy of their very being.

For the world, journalists put on a cloak they call "educated non-bias." But it is a cloak rife with holes. The holes include, in the words of an unknown writer, the "personal baggage of emotional, political and religious upbringing." But the biggest hole of all is education itself, for knowledge breeds opinion. Anyone who has at their fingertips as much information as a journalist is either a liar or a fool if they claim they have no opinions on matters of importance.

And for most journalists it is the former. In front of the general public they wear their cloak, yet in the sanctity of the newsrooms, reporters de-robe in the form of the sources they choose to ignore and words they let permeate the stories they write and tell.

Examples are plentiful. I know a journalist who refuses to write or use a story in which groups that oppose abortion are used as background sources. Of course, the same person practically has the telephone numbers of Planned Parenthood entered in the speed-dial.

The sad thing is that journalists are so self-absorbed they think everyone is blind to their practices and ideology – many think they are actually fooling the simpletons in the general

public. Yet poll after poll shows Americans see the "slant" in journalism. What slant? People use "liberal" – a term I despise for its lack of a definition, yet for these purposes I will not argue it.

Is it really there? Of course. Recently I was sitting with a fellow journalist who remarked that Christians need to "get off" their moral issues and change with the times. After all, this "unbiased" person reasoned, the rest of the world disagrees with them. While there are so many points to argue in that sentiment, it generally reflects the attitude of many in the profession.

Lisa Caputa – Hillary Clinton's press secretary – was on C-SPAN's *Sunday Journal* a few weeks back. She said the main reason the Clinton health care plan failed was the media's coverage of the policy-making process. She complained that because the public saw the process (hidden meetings, hundreds of like-minded specialists, socialists galore), the voters were dead-set against the final product.

Caputa went so far as to suggest that the media is, perhaps, giving too much information to the public.

While it's ironic that this comes from the administration that ran on the "people's" ticket, it is similar to cries from the Nixon, Reagan and countless other White Houses.

What is shocking, however, is that neither the C-SPAN moderator nor the sniveler-of-the-week really took her to task. They just nodded sadly, said something should be done, and moved on to the next subject.

If journalists are to be taken seriously by the public, they need to put away their bleeding hearts and toughen their skin. It's time for those of us in this most despised and needed of professions to own up to our convictions and then do our jobs.

When journalists do not rail against suggestions that they are reporting too much, the public will suffer. When reporters start questioning whether or not they should report all the news, the public's watchdog is like the hunting canine no longer willing to retrieve the duck. ... It's not worth the food it's being fed.

Michael Sullivan is a staff writer for The Brazosport Facts. His column runs each Thursday.



Letters to the editor

Teens need place to play

**To EDITOR:**

I have been made aware of a real need in Lake Jackson today. I am a grandmother of a freshman in the local high school. He and two friends asked me to drive them to the Recreation Center, to check on a program they had heard existed. They were told there that a program they have is only for people up to age 12.

The high school has a limited number that they can work with, and I understand their position. But there are many who are not so talented, but have a love for sports participation.

We adults see kids roaming the streets, and think they are up to no good, sometimes they are not.

Some might do different if they were given the opportunity. If anything can be done to help them realize there are other fun things to do, rather than hang out and drink or do drugs, then we are morally obligated to try some means of doing it.

Most of us adults wish there was a place we could send kids when they are about 13 and leave them until they are 18. But there's no such place.

This is a difficult age to deal with. Some people will say things have been tried before,

and the kids won't participate. No, all will not, but if some do, that's a start.

I encourage anyone else who sees this need to please let your thoughts be known. I know there must be many out there who have kids who would fit this category, and would be willing to help any way they could. I plan to send a letter to the Lake Jackson City Council, and I hope you will do the same.

Avis Walton  
Lake Jackson

**Question on Bush brothers answered**

**To EDITOR:**

In answer to the question to the editor, I finally heard the facts. The eldest Bush son was involved in the Colorado Savings & Loan, not the two who are running for governor in Texas and Florida, George W. and Jeb, respectfully.

La Beth Kester  
Freeport

**What are we doing in Haiti?**

**To EDITOR:**

Why are we in Haiti? What is the purpose? Is it to free Haiti from a dictatorship? If yes, then

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why aren't we doing the same thing everywhere else? Should we force other countries to "do it our way"? How do we know we aren't putting another dictatorship in place by what we are doing?

Is it to stop Haitians from coming to the United States? Does that require a military takeover or does that require some sort of economic improvements that our military can't do? Why couldn't we send the people back in the first place?

Are we in Haiti to protect American interests there? If yes, what are those interests? Why haven't we heard that in the news section? Could it be that some politicians are taking pay-

offs by companies in Haiti to send the military there? Surely our politicians wouldn't do such a thing, would they?

Or are soldiers being sent to risk their lives in Haiti so that President Clinton can pretend that he is a strong military leader to offset his draft-dodging days during the Vietnam conflict?

Does the Democratic Party want us to be involved in a war so we'll be less likely to pay attention to what they are doing in Washington like they have done many times in the past? Does anyone know?

Why are we in Haiti? Can anyone truthfully tell me? And can anyone tell me when and how we can get out?

Michael Horn  
Sweeney

**Reader offers view on censorship**

**To EDITOR:**

I am writing in response to Michael Sullivan's column from Oct. 20. Sullivan's article dealt with censorship and the idea that it should not be supported. This issue sprang from a small Texas town that banned Howard Stern's book from the public library.

The question for debate is whether or not it is censorship for a local government to ban a

book from public discourse. Michael Sullivan says yes. However, it is not censorship for American citizens to decide what they want done with their tax money.

If a local government does not want to purchase a book, it has the right to exercise its freedom by not purchasing the book.

Any person has the right to paint, write or create something and sell it to the public. The public can then decide whether or not to purchase the product.

It is not censorship for a local government to ban a book. It is simply citizens exercising their freedom by choosing what to spend their own tax money on.

Deanna Trent  
Lake Jackson

**Input sought on GATT proposal**

**To EDITOR:**

I would like very much if you could give lots of facts and figures on this GATT business.

How will it benefit the U.S.A.?

The very little I have read does not sound very good. As a matter of fact, Charley Reese is the only information I have on this.

Enlighten me.

Troy R. Frizzell  
Clute

Today in History

**By The Associated Press**

Today is Thursday, Nov. 3, the 307th day of 1994. There are 58 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight:**

On Nov. 3, 1900, the first automobile show in the United States opened at New York's Madison Square Garden under the auspices of the Automobile Club of America.

**On this date:**

In 1839, the first Opium War between China and Britain erupted as two British frigates and a fleet of war junks clashed off the Chinese coast.

In 1903, Panama proclaimed its independence from Colombia.

In 1979, five radicals were killed when gunfire erupted during an anti-Ku Klux Klan demonstration in Greensboro, N.C., after a caravan of Klansmen and Nazis had driven into the area.

Current Quotes

**By The Associated Press**

▼ "Say no to this radical attack on Social Security." **President Clinton**, criticizing a GOP platform he said would cut Social Security benefits by \$2,000 a year and Medicare by \$1,800 to pay for promises to balance the budget, increase defense spending and offer tax breaks for the rich.

▼ "It didn't look like it had a left wing on it. ... It just looked like a black streak coming down." **Larry Midkiff**, who witnessed the crash of an American Eagle commuter plane as he drove along Interstate 65 in Indiana. All 68 people aboard Flight 4184 from Indianapolis to Chicago were killed.

▼ "I'm hoping to slip into obscurity. ... I want to paint my house. I just want to go home." **Paula Coughlin**, the former Navy lieutenant who blew the whistle on the 1991 Tailhook scandal, after a jury ordered the Las Vegas Hilton and its parent company to pay her \$6.7 million in damages.